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future tree, careless that his eye shall not rest on its maturity ; faithful that, when he shall have gone hence, the powers of nature will yet do their work on it. Great and noble is this lofty calm, this holy trustfulness ; — how nobler than the fiery zeal, the impetuous rage, with which the lesser spirits of the earth rush on to battle with its ill and error. These, also, have, under God's providence, their office ; but it is as that of the tempest and the lightning, not of the genial rain and quickening sunshine. These, too, have their reward ; they shall be noted in their time ; for a season the world shall count them with its doers of great deeds. Vainly may such, earth's heroes of a day, aspire to stand among those chosen ones called to be fellow-workers with the Eternal.

ART. III. — 1. *Shakspeare's Plays, with his Life. Illustrated with many hundred Wood-cuts, executed by H. W. Hewet, after Designs by Henry Meadows, Harvey, and others.* Edited by GULIAN C. VERPLANCK, LL. D., with Critical Introductions, Notes, etc., Original and Selected. New York : Harper & Brothers. 3 vols. 8vo.

2. *Lectures on Shakspeare.* By H. N. HUDSON. New York : Baker & Scribner. 2 vols. 12mo.

THOSE who consider the science of criticism nothing more than a collection of arbitrary rules, and the art of criticism but their dexterous or declamatory application, rejoice in a system of admirable simplicity and barren results. It has the advantage of judging every thing and accounting for nothing, thus gratifying the pride of intellect without enjoining any intellectual exertion. By a steady adherence to its doctrines, a dunce may exalt himself to a pinnacle of judgment, from which the first authors of the world appear as splendid madmen, whose enormous writhings and contortions, as they occasionally blunder into grace and grandeur of motion, show an undisciplined strength, which would, if subjected to rule, produce great effects. A Bond-Street exquisite complacently surveying a thunder-scarred Titan

through an opera-glass is but a type of a Grub-Street critic, measuring a Milton or a Shakspeare with his three-foot rule.

But the golden period of this kind of criticism, when mediocrity sat cross-legged on the body of genius, and sagely delivered its oracular nonentities, has happily passed away. The fat bishop of the elder time, who discovered that the *Paradise Lost* was a licentious and blasphemous poem, and the lean authorling who first informed the world that Shakspeare was an inspired idiot, have both departed into the void inane. The period has gone by when France could dismiss Shakspeare from the company of Corneille and Racine as a clever barbarian, or England herself rate him as a sort of miraculous monstrosity, neither so elegant as Waller nor so correct as Mr. Pope. The old antithesis between genius and judgment, taste and creative power, which has sparkled and rung in so many glittering sentences, has now lost most of its point, and is enjoyed only as a gem from the antique. It is no longer the fashion for beauty to be tested by elegance, or truth by mechanical correctness, or nature by convention, or art by artifice. Mr. Prettyman, with his conceited lisp, and Sir Artegal's Talus, with his iron flail, have both been banished from the gardens of the Hesperides.

This substitution of a philosophy of criticism for an anarchy of dogmas is especially seen in the recent editions of Shakspeare. Fifty years ago, he was compared, in reference to his commentators, to Actæon hunted to death by his own dogs. But the present generation has witnessed a marked change in the spirit and principles of the criticism by which he has been tried. Could all those Sir Francis Wrongheads of the last century, who undertook to patronize Shakspeare as a wild, unregulated genius, and kindly volunteered their praise on the score of his great faults being balanced by great beauties, suddenly start up in the present age, we may well imagine with what a stare of blank amazement they would observe his elevation to the throne of art. It might reasonably be supposed that old John Dennis and Mr. Rymer would retire in disgust to their tombs, rather than accept the boon of life in a generation devoted to so Egyptian an adoration of deformities. The difference between an old critic picking flaws in Shakspeare's expression

of passion, and a modern critic raving about the artistic significance of Shakspeare's puns, indicates the extremes of criticism through which the "myriad-minded" poet has passed. At present, there appears to be no danger that his intellectual supremacy will be questioned. The antiquary who ventures to stammer a little in the old jargon is quietly dropped by good society ; the sciolist who blurts out a blunt objection is vehemently hissed into non-existence. Schlegel's prediction, that Shakspeare's fame for centuries to come would "continue to gather strength, like an Alpine avalanche, at every moment of its progress," seems to be in the process of verification ; for with every new edition and criticism the giant dilates into larger and larger dimensions. He has invaded France ; he has conquered Germany. The principalities and powers of literature find no safety but in the acknowledgment of his supremacy. To the old republic of letters he comes as the intellectual Cæsar, who is to establish a universal dominion. The different orders of the literary state, far from opposing his pretensions, are engaged in hymning his divinity. Here and there some lean Cassius mutters treason against the god, complains that he bestrides the world like a Colossus, and leaves other poets little to do but peep about for dishonorable graves ; but all peevish exceptions are drowned in the universal shout which lifts his name to the skies.

"Nothing can cover his high fame but heaven,
No monuments set off his memories
But the eternal substance of his greatness."

This idolatry of Shakspeare is partly the cause and partly the effect of a new school of criticism, which assumes to judge works of art after a new code of principles. The mistake which the old order of critics made consisted in overlooking the doctrine of vital powers. They judged the form of Shakspeare's works by certain external rules, before they had interpreted the inward life which shaped the form. Shakspeare's genius was always felt as supreme above others, because its reality and force could not be resisted ; but the criticism which should have made it understood as well as felt, which should have accounted for its effects, pursued exactly the opposite course. Instead of attempting to translate it to the understanding by evolving its principles, it placed it in antagonism to certain notions in the understand-

ing, which were unfounded in the nature of things. Because genius has its own laws, it is not therefore to be considered lawless ; yet such was the judgment passed upon Shakspeare's genius by men who, substituting dogmatism for analysis, did not possess the first requisite of a critic, that of understanding the thing criticized. The consequence was an absurd opposition between judgment and feeling, taste and genius. Men were compelled to admire what they were taught to condemn. We perceive the effect of this even in a man of such comprehensive sympathies as Dryden. Nothing can be more contemptible than Dryden's criticism on Shakspeare's art ; yet when he abandoned his rules and trusted to his own conceptions of excellence, when he ceased to judge as a critic and spoke as a poet, nothing can excel the warmth or the accuracy of his rhapsodies. Eliminate from his celebrated passage on Shakspeare every term which may be called critical, and there is nothing in English literature, from Ben Johnson to Coleridge, which contains so true a representation of Shakspeare's mind.

Now the critical revolution which has taken place in the present century does not pretend so much to increase our sympathy with Shakspeare as to increase our knowledge of him ; and accordingly we perceive its influence not merely in the opinions of men of imagination and sensibility, but in those of critics chiefly distinguished for sense and understanding. The revolution, being one of principles, has affected the judgments of writers who bear, in mind and character, the same relative position to the present period which the old critics bore to their time. It would be unjust to compare Schlegel and Coleridge with Johnson and Malone, as indicating a change in the general scope and spirit of literary judgments ; but if we compare Johnson with Hallam, we are still conscious of a great and essential difference, — a difference not so much in the faculties employed as in the principles by which they are guided. This is so true, that the meaning of judgment and taste, so far as the results obtained by their exercise are concerned, has completely altered. When Dr. Johnson said of *Cymbeline*, that to notice its defects and improbabilities in detail were "to waste criticism on unresisting imbecility," he proved himself a person of great judgment, according to the principles of the eighteenth century ; but a man who hazarded such an opinion

now would be set down, we will not say as an ignoramus, but as one whose taste was under the dominion of individual caprice, and whose judgment was wholly deficient in correctness.

The two works named at the head of the present article, Mr. Verplanck's edition of Shakspeare and Mr. Hudson's Lectures, are a fair indication of the progress which criticism has made within a century. Neither could have been produced fifty years ago, for the materials were wanting. Mr. Verplanck had the wide field of English antiquarian, verbal, and æsthetical criticism open to him, and he has swept over the whole domain. He has especially availed himself of the researches of the various commentators, without, however, adopting their insufferable prolixity of statement. His edition, though it has the character of a *rifacimento*, still combines a greater number of positive merits, and is calculated for a wider variety of readers, than any with which we are acquainted ; but it is so in virtue of the judgment the editor has evinced in selecting the peculiar excellences of many editions, and in avoiding the peculiar faults of each. He had at his command a singularly rich collection of materials, embodying the results of a century of research, and containing the separate items of a good edition floating about in an ocean of words. There was, therefore, a constant strain upon his judgment and taste in the mere task of selection and compression. Antiquarians and commentators are apt unconsciously to rate their discoveries and illustrations as of more value than the things to which they refer ; and Shakspeare especially has been sacrificed by a class of lynx-eyed dogmatists, always quarrelling among themselves, and each claiming for the morsels of useful knowledge he has contributed a ludicrous importance.

Mr. Verplanck has shown much strength and catholicity of mind in not being embarrassed by the varying opinions of this army of acute triflers, at the same time that he has largely availed himself of their labors. In the notes to each play ; in tracing out the sources, historical and romantic, of the plots ; in the bibliographical discussion as to the order in which the plays were printed, he blends his own learning very gracefully with what he has condensed from others. The text appears to be the portion of the work on which he has expended the greatest care, and is the result of a

most cautious comparison, word by word, of the original quarto editions of the various plays with the original folio published by Heminge and Condell, and of both with the editions of Malone, Collier, and Knight. Though, from the nature of the case, the text of no one editor can be so perfect as to settle all disputes regarding particular passages, we think it must be conceded to Mr. Verplanck that he has executed this difficult and delicate task with a great deal of acuteness and sagacity, and displayed a much clearer insight into the spirit and form of Shakspeare's style than a large majority of those who have undertaken the drudgery of its arrangement.

But it is as a critic, rather than as an editor, that Mr. Verplanck claims our attention here. His introductions to the plays are really additions to the higher Shakspearian criticism, not so much for any peculiar felicity in the analysis of character, as in the view, partly bibliographical, partly philosophical, which he takes of the gradual development of Shakspeare's mind, and the different stages of its growth. It is the first connected attempt to trace out Shakspeare's intellectual history and character, gathering, to use Mr. Verplanck's own words, "from various, and sometimes slight and circumstantial, or collateral, points of testimony, the order and succession of his works, assigning, so far as possible, each one to its probable epoch, noting the variations or differences of style and of versification between them, and in some cases (as in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry Fifth*, and *Hamlet*), the alterations and improvements of the same play by the author himself, in the progress of his taste and experience; thus following out, through each successive change, the luxuriant growth of his poetic faculty and his comic power, and finally, the still nobler expansion of the moral wisdom, the majestic contemplation, the terrible energy, the matchless fusion of the impassioned with the philosophical, that distinguished the matured mind of the author of *Hamlet*, of *Lear*, and of *Macbeth*." In this portion of his labors, Mr. Verplanck has shown a solidity and independence of judgment, and a power of clearly appreciating almost every opinion from which he dissents, which give to his own views the fairness and weight of judicial decisions. His defects as a critic are principally those which come from the absence in part of sensitive sympathies and of the

power of sharp, minute, exhaustive analysis. He is of the school of Hallam, a school in which judgment and generalization rule with such despotic control, that the heart and imagination hardly have fair play, and strongly marked individualities too often subside into correct generalities.

Before hazarding any remarks on Mr. Hudson's striking Lectures, it may not be out of place to refer to a few of the philosophical critics who have preceded him, in order that his station among them may be calculated with some degree of accuracy. After a careful perusal of his work, we have been forced to the conclusion, that, in spite of its faults, there is no single critical production on Shakspeare which equals it in completeness and force of thought in the examination of individual characters. It is a work which no person could have written without devoting himself with rare constancy to one object, and without availing himself to some extent of the labors of his predecessors in the same department of thought. The materials for a critical view of Shakspeare are widely scattered. Almost every eminent poet and critic of Germany and England has, within the last half-century, recorded his impressions of the world's master mind ; and perhaps in the stray observations of Goethe we have glances into the nature of Shakspeare's genius as profound and accurate as ever were won by the intensest toil of inspection. Hallam, Carlyle, Campbell, and many others, have presented striking criticisms on the plays, or thrown out valuable suggestions respecting the characters, in works not exclusively devoted to Shakspeare. Hazlitt, Mrs. Jameson, and Ulrici have produced separate volumes on the subject. Of the professed critics, however, Schlegel and Coleridge, as they are first in point of time, appear to us first in respect to excellence. They were, to a great extent, the originators of the school of philosophical criticism, and we find in them a systematic statement of its principles, in their application to all forms of imaginative literature.

The history of the variations of criticism with regard to Shakspeare would involve a consideration of all critical theories, from those founded on individual impressions to those based on an observation of the essential laws of mental growth and production. These two extremes of criticism, as different as subject and object, are often confounded, — a work of art as it affects a particular mind being commonly a con-

vertible phrase for a work of art as it is in itself. The middle ground between the two has most obtained among those who are called men of culture. This consists in testing the value of all works of art by their conformity to certain rules generalized from the productions of a particular school, — as if the romantic drama, as seen in Shakspeare, should be judged by the principles of the classic drama, as seen in Sophocles. It is evident, we think, that if criticism be a science, if it assume to convey any real knowledge, it deals not with individual impressions or arbitrary rules, but with laws ; and its progress will be determined by its success in employing a right method to discover the laws of the objects to which it refers. As the philosopher is content to investigate and establish the laws of the human mind and the phenomena of nature, leaving to the skeptic or the idealist the luxury of denying their existence or supplying better from his own resources, so the critic is bound to pursue a similar method with regard to a work of art, and to interpret, if he can, its inward meaning and significance. This, at least, is the process in all other sciences. If a plant, insect, fish, or other animal, is to undergo a scientific examination, a *savant* is not welcomed with a shower of honorary degrees because he has felicitously ridiculed its external form, or shown its want of agreement with some other natural object, but because he has investigated its inward mechanism, indicated its purpose, and shown that its form is physiognomical of its peculiar life. Now we think that Hamlet and Lear are as worthy of this tolerant treatment as a bird or a fish ; at least, we are confident that no scientific knowledge of either can be obtained in any other way. Because the principle implies that a true creation of the intellect has thus an independent existence and merit of its own, and is to be judged by its own laws, or its own fitness to serve the purposes of its creation, it does not thence follow, that its relative merit, as compared with other works of art, is altogether put beyond the jurisdiction of criticism. Because a rose may be considered a finer flower than a violet, we are not bound to test the beauty of one by its agreement with the other. At least, in regard to the productions of the intellect, there can be no accurate classification, no settlement of their position in the sliding scale of excellence or greatness, without understanding the spirit and life of each.

Now the great merit of Schlegel consisted in discarding from his system all quibbles respecting superficial differences in the form of works of genius, and looking directly at the inward life which animated and shaped the form. His view of Shakspeare, which did so much to revolutionize the tone of English criticism, is contained in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, delivered in Vienna in the spring of 1808. Had he written nothing else, this work would be sufficient to place him among the greatest critics of the world. It not only develops a system of principles of uncommon reach and depth, but contains a review of the dramatists and dramatic literature of Greece, Rome, France, Italy, England, Spain, and Germany, grappling sturdily with all the vexed questions of dramatic art which start up in each stage of the inquiry. Almost for the first time, we find, in his work, a critic who profoundly appreciates at once the drama of Greece, England, and Spain, and does it in virtue of following out the central principle of a comprehensive critical system. Sweeping over the whole field of dramatic literature, he detects, in the variety of its kinds, in its metempsychosis through various forms, the true character of each period of its development, and considers the genius of each period in relation to the materials it assimilated and the purposes it served. He is an ardent and intelligent admirer of Æschylus and Sophocles, and for that very reason contemns all attempts to reproduce them in other ages. As he really understands the great Greek dramatists, he sees the excellence of Shakspeare and Calderon in their departure from the Greek models. Starting with a distinct idea of the difference between mechanical regularity and organic form, he is at once a remorseless critic of mediocrity and an interpretative critic of genius ; for by demanding that a work of art, however modest its pretensions, shall be an organic whole with a central principle of life, he discards from his sympathies the productions of the most accomplished artisans of letters, and the most ingenious combinations of inanimate parts. His work is the first attempt at viewing the dramatic literature of the world under the light of a principle broad enough to include every variety of intellectual excellence, and overlooking nothing informed with a living soul.

Had the author been entirely free from individual bias,

and had he possessed also the faculty of contracting his vision with as much facility as he dilated it, his work would hardly have left much for later critics to perform ; but we perceive, here and there, the effect upon his mind of the literary controversies in which he had been engaged, and some of his individual judgments are contrary to the catholicity of his principles. Besides, as his comprehensiveness was not accompanied by corresponding acuteness, he not unfrequently becomes the dupe of his own refinements, especially in criticizing the details of a work of art ; - for we imagine a truly acute man is not so likely to be deceived in a criticism of particulars, as a comprehensive one is in affecting subtilty in order to bring the details of a thing into harmony with his general conception. In Schlegel's celebrated view of Shakspeare's mind and art, we perceive the influence of this defect. Nothing can be more lucid than his exposition of the general character and scope of Shakspeare's genius, and of the principles by which it should be judged ; but, when he comes to review the particular plays, his very determination to find excellence in every thing often leads to his missing the greatest excellence. He is so occupied in tracing out the main design of the piece, and exhibiting the pervading unity through all the variety of parts, that he comparatively overlooks the "characterization." Now the fundamental idea, the ultimate principle, the living root, of one of Shakspeare's plays can be reached only by an intense conception or exhaustive analysis of the characters, for these give to the main design its peculiar Shakspearian coloring and significance ; and to exhibit the dependence of the parts on the main design, without fully appreciating the parts, results in reducing the whole to something little above commonplace. Every attempt to follow a purely synthetic process in an exposition of Shakspeare's plays has been a failure, because it requires a mind capable of reproducing Shakspeare's own conceptions, and grasping with one effort of imagination a Shakspearian whole. To exhibit a tragedy like that of Hamlet as it grew up in the creator's mind, indicating the exact period when the different characters necessarily branched off from the trunk in obedience to the law at its root, would seem to require a genius such as has not yet taken criticism for a vocation. Goethe seems to have had some inward idea of the secret

of Shakspeare's processes, but the scattered observations in which he hinted his knowledge are but stammering expressions of his conception.

It is curious that Coleridge, if we may believe his own statement of the matter, in a series of lectures on Shakspeare, anticipated Schlegel in all his leading principles of criticism, and applied them, in a similar manner, to the interpretation of ancient and modern art. When he first delivered his lectures, he says he was laughed at as an utterer of startling paradoxes ; but on the publication of Schlegel's work, he affirms that the laughers changed their tone, and berated him as a plagiarist. Coleridge's lectures we know only through the fragments published in his *Literary Remains* ; but they were originally attended by some six hundred people, and accordingly there were abundant witnesses, if they had ever given in their evidence, to testify to his originality. The leading merit of Schlegel, as we have already said, is rather in breadth of view than in any surpassing felicity of individual criticism ; and in regard to Shakspeare, we think him inferior to Coleridge in strong and vivid conception, and in the power of stamping a deep impression of a character or incident upon the mind, through modes of expression which only a poet can command. With all his wilfulness and vagaries, Coleridge possessed, as a critic, not only grand glimpses of the inmost spirit of a work of art, but a remarkable faculty of intellectual analysis ; and as he had made Shakspeare and his creations the subject of profound and contemplative study, he was eminently calculated for the office of his interpreter, both to the understanding and the imagination of his countrymen. But he lacked the talent of writing clearly in prose. A series of conceptions as they stood in his mind never found adequate expression on his page. He has sentences of wonderful beauty, distinctness, and force, embodying separate thoughts of the greatest originality and depth ; but there is little connection or orderly arrangement of matter in his prose works. He offends against the first principle of his own critical code, being essentially a writer of parts, not of wholes, of fragments, not of systems. In respect to principles, he is probably the first critic of the century ; in respect to criticisms, he occupies a much lower rank. His fragments on Shakspeare are of great value, but their value consists chiefly in

their suggestiveness, in the bright hints they have afforded to those who have had the sagacity to plant them in their own minds, and allow them to germinate.

Hazlitt's work on the *Characters of Shakspeare's Plays* is a medley of great and small matters, ranging from criticism to vituperation, from the exposition of Shakspeare to the exhibition of himself. Hazlitt's sense of his own individuality was so strong, that he could not altogether forget it in the contemplation of the most objective of poets ; and though his volume bears on every page the marks of his acute and penetrating intellect, and is animated by bursts of his captivating, but distempered, eloquence, the general impression it leaves on the mind is unsatisfactory. It is supposed that many of the finest observations in his work were gathered in conversations with Coleridge.

Mrs. Jameson's volume on the *Female Characters* is a most eloquent and impassioned representation of Shakspeare's women, and in many respects is an important contribution to critical literature. Its defects are so covered up in the brilliancy and buoyancy of its style, that they are likely to escape notice. In the beautiful tumult of bright words, and the uniform glare of the representation, we are apt to overlook the lack of close and searching examination. Fine and true as are many of her remarks, and valuable as is much of the information she dares to give, she still is too apt to blend her own individuality with the individualities she is describing, and to think she is comprehending Shakspeare when Shakspeare is simply comprehending her. We feel it difficult to say thus much in abatement of the praise cheerfully awarded to one of the most fascinating books in the language, but we hardly think that any judicious admirer of Mrs. Jameson can suppose that Shakspeare's heroines could pass through the medium of her mind without a modification of their essential character.

But exceeding all books on the great dramatist in bulk and pretension is Ulrici's big octavo on *Shakspeare's Dramatic Art*. This is German in the worst sense of the word, being so strange a conglomeration of sense and fanaticism, of sagacity and dulness, that it is impossible to call it either excellent or execrable. It is learned, ingenious, acute, often eloquent, often profound, gives evidence of careful research and deep thought, and is worthy to be read by every man

who can muster courage to read it ; but it hardly conveys any impression of Shakspeare at all. The author regards his system first, himself second, and his nominal subject last. He takes as high ground for Shakspeare's genius as can possibly be assumed, and then impresses on his whole works the peculiar form of his own dominant dogma. Shakspeare, according to him, consciously or unconsciously wrote in perfect harmony with the truth of things, and the "ground-idea" of every one of his plays is a theological doctrine. When he comes to develop this general principle, we find that he is not taking Shakspeare as an object of critical investigation, but as an illustration of his own philosophical and theological opinions ; and the "thousand-souled" Shakspeare, the "oceanic mind," dwindles down into a mere auxiliary of the "one-idea'd" Ulrici. The characters are not analyzed, and are viewed only in reference to the axiomatic moral they are said to convey. The great "ground-idea" of the book may be said to consist in the assumption, that Shakspeare wrote his plays to illustrate the five points of Calvinism. We do not say that these points cannot be found in Shakspeare, for almost every subjective mind finds there exactly what it brings ; but it is somewhat ridiculous for a person to suppose that he has measured the genius of the world's master dramatist, when he has merely given the measure of himself. Ulrici's ingenuity and learning are sufficient to enable him to make out a plausible case ; but he appears to us farther from Shakspeare in spirit than old Rymer himself.

Ulrici is an indication of the extravagances to which the principles of an interpretative criticism may seem to lead, when they are employed as a mere cover under which to smuggle individual impressions. In the Lectures of Mr. Hudson, we perceive that a right application of the same principles may result in a positive addition to knowledge. Although the American critic has his own eccentricities of opinion and expression, and displays occasionally a disposition to fight his own battles under Shakspeare's banner, he still contrives generally to maintain a marked line of distinction between his own impressions and the laws of the objects he investigates. His work, apart from its independent merits of composition and criticism, stands in intimate relation to the productions of his predecessors, especially to those of

Schlegel and Coleridge. Possessing in a considerable degree the power of learning from other minds without becoming their vassal, Mr. Hudson's Lectures are the result of a study both of Shakspeare and his critics. By thus embodying in his own work the most valuable portion of former Shakspearian criticism, he is enabled to advance beyond it. The leading characteristic of the philosophical critics, that of excessive generalization, which led them comparatively to neglect the analysis of Shakspeare's characters, he has unconsciously avoided, from the instinctive antipathy of his mind to all generalities not vitally connected with objects. Though his passionate dislike of abstractions deprives his Lectures of that appearance of comprehensiveness which comes from a suppression, rather than an inclusion, of details, and though it is sometimes felt as a real defect, still it is that quality of his mind which has enabled him to succeed in the most neglected department of Shakspearian criticism, that of evolving the elements and laws of the individual characters, and indicating their application to practical life.

Before, however, we attempt a consideration of Mr. Hudson's positive merits as a thinker and critic, we must notice some obvious peculiarities of his character and style. These can hardly be allowed to elude criticism on the ground of their genuineness, for we are by no means inclined to give the critic the advantage of being judged in accordance with the philosophical principles he may apply to poets. The first impression which a reader obtains of Mr. Hudson is undoubtedly that of a powerful but somewhat perverse writer, gifted with more than an ordinary degree of combativeness, and battling for opinions with all the energy of a man engaged in a personal conflict. Possessing a strong and sturdy understanding, quick and deep sympathies, an affluent fancy, and a biting wit, with a large command of the most vigorous and apposite language, and a perfect fearlessness as to whom or what he hits, he stalks into the company of decorous critics and prim essayists with his Shakspearian thesis in his hand, and, on the slightest intimation of a desire for controversy, incontinently rains down on his opponents a storm of propositions, arguments, and epigrams, from which they are glad to escape by a precipitate flight. Nothing can be more unphilosophical than Mr. Hudson's manner, and it is in strange contrast to the polite sneer, and somewhat prim and

reserved contempt, with which Schlegel dismisses an opponent, or the exclamatory regret with which Coleridge mourns the narrowness of a critic's creed. Alike in narrative, in the exposition of principles, in the analysis of characters, in side thrusts at popular foibles and delusions, Mr. Hudson's style is characterized by intensity and intellectual fierceness. His only mode of conquering an adversary is to overthrow him, and when he has him down he ends the matter by pommelling him to death. He enters the lists as Shakspeare's champion, and woe to the unlucky wight, no matter how accredited his reputation as an author, who has at any time dropped incautious expressions raising a doubt of Shakspeare's supremacy. Thus, Mr. Hume's unfortunate remark respecting the Elizabethan age, as regards the correctness and taste of its literature, affords the occasion of a furious attack on that acutest of metaphysicians, in which every weak point in his mind is pricked and pierced with the most remorseless certainty of aim, until he expires at last under a tempest of epigrams. Some miserable heretics against the true critical faith, whose stupidity and insignificance preserve them from being roasted in the slow fires of wit, but who have been lifted into some celebrity by the enormity of their crimes in attempting to improve Shakspeare down to popular taste, are loaded with nicknames and pelted with scornful epithets. Nahum Tate, one of these plebeian butchers of the poet's plots and style, is hooted at as a "wooden-headed man," and his improved Lear is kicked through a truculent paragraph, until at last our sympathies plead for poor Nahum on the ground of the wrong implied in cruelty to animals. This feeling, that meddling with Shakspeare's plays is literally sacrilege, and objecting to them is audacious heresy, indicates how thorough is our author's worship of his subject, and how intensely he has realized it to his mind as a living reality.

The style of Mr. Hudson is a fair image of his intellect and character, admitting considerable variety of expression, but stamped throughout with strongly marked and peculiar traits. It is the vehicle, not merely of analysis and reflection, but of wit, satire, scorn, passion, and fancy. Often, indeed, the former qualities find their raciest expression under the latter, and the reader is favored with a chain of logical deduction, the links of which are epigrams, or with a theory

impaled on a scalpel festooned with imagery. It would be difficult to describe the style, for it varies with the writer's moods and the subjects treated, and is restrained neither by self-imposed nor rhetorical rules. Now bristling with antithesis, now flashing with satire, — at one time melting into softness and sweetness of diction, at another, bringing out the thought with a jerk in a perfect verbal spasm, — now sharp, crisp, biting, scornfully defiant, each short sentence exploding into sparkles, and then again rolling on in a grand succession of harmonious periods, — it always has the merit of clearness and precision, and in all its alternations, from scientific terms which approach the obscure to homely phrases which fall plump into the inelegant, there is little chance of missing the meaning. It is a style full of the energy of life, but a life which is sometimes galvanized into spasmodic strength.

The author's command of language is despotic, and like all despots he not unfrequently exercises his power capriciously. This is shown principally in extravagance of statement and in repetition of thought. The first is, to a great extent, the result of his greatest merit, for extravagance in expression comes as often from intense as from feeble conception, resulting in one case from the boiling over of the mind in vehement language, in the excitement produced by proximity to a great object which awakens all its powers, and in the other being merely an attempt to make words perform the office both of thinking and expression. Mr. Hudson, except, perhaps, in his analyses of Shakspeare's female characters, does not give to his subjects that remoteness which admits of their calm contemplation, but writes close to the vital truth of the thing he describes, with that tingling of the blood which such an immediate contact with the soul of passion and the life of thought produces and prolongs. To dive into the depths of Hamlet's mind, or to follow step by step the progress of crime in the heart and imagination of Macbeth, or to pass resolutely into that awful region of passion whose terrible gusts rend the frames of Othello and Lear, is not a thing to be done or recorded with an even pulse and a cool brain. We accordingly think that, in such instances as these, Mr. Hudson's extravagance of expression, though not always strictly accurate as to thought, is eminently true to feeling, and will be more successful in stamping on the reader's mind a living impression of the characters than

if he had weighed his words with more scrupulous care. But he has an exaggeration of statement of another kind, which consists in lifting persons into the perfection of principles, and confounding possibilities with realities. Thus, in the view of Shakspeare's mind, in many respects a masterly specimen of thought and composition, he makes Shakspeare to be what he really only approached, and seems to forget that after all which can be said of him as a great man, with large powers harmoniously combined, he was still a man, and not humanity. This extravagance we know is simply the extravagance of epigram, aiming to suggest the truth more vividly by exaggerating it ; but an analyst so close and subtile as Mr. Hudson, with his felicity and pride in limitations, has hardly a right to expect that his readers or critics will allow him to claim exemption from the very letter of the law.

The other fault of Mr. Hudson, that of repetition, is common to him with almost all lecturers. He has less of it than Cousin and Villemain, in whose discourses the leading ideas are made to perform an amount of labor, in the mere changing of dress and attitude, which at last wears and wastes them away. The repetition we observe in Mr. Hudson results from an occasional fanaticism of acuteness, which is skeptical of the ability of a proposition to convey a complete idea, and is eager to express all its elements. Though he embodies the most refined distinctions of analysis with uncommon skill and verbal certainty, he lingers occasionally too long on one subtilty, presents it in a variety of attitudes through a succession of brilliant sentences, and, indeed, indulges his power of condensed expression at the expense of real condensation of thought. Thus, an acute or profound observation is often first stated in language whose meaning ignorance itself cannot miss, then embodied in an image, then again forced into an antithetic or epigrammatic form, and afterwards, perhaps, silyly made to perform the office of sting to a gibe, until, in the end, it is hammered out of the head in the very attempt to hammer it in. This characteristic is more especially observable in the earlier lectures, in which, being compelled to present the profoundest principles of philosophical criticism in a popular form, his eagerness to make them readily apprehended leads him to push them into every minor avenue to the mind, as well as to send them on the direct road to the understanding.

We have one more cause of quarrel with Mr. Hudson before we proceed to the positive merits of his book. It is so rare to have a critic before our court of literary justice, that when we do, it is proper to make him feel how "sharper than a serpent's tooth" is the bite of criticism to an author. Our present objection refers to the explosions of Mr. Hudson's individuality in the guerilla warfare which he wages against the reformers and transcendentalists of our enlightened age. This bush-fighting along the main road of the text, though it lends raciness to the style, and will doubtless delight many who have no appreciation of his great merits as a thinker and critic, is often carried to the extreme limits of a reviewer's forbearance. Many of his remarks are unquestionably acute and just, and as far as they ridicule strutting pretension, presumptuous imbecility, and complacent ignorance, — as far as they unmask the "moral bullies and virtuous braggadocios" who are engaged in beating up a little conscience into a great deal of ethical and political froth, or probe sharply those small coteries of elegant souls, where

"Self-inspection sucks his little thumb," —

we have little to say in objection, except that his digressions somewhat break the unity of his discourse; but he himself is sometimes forced by his contempt or indignation to the opposite extreme, and to class, in appearance at least, the principles of civil and religious liberty under the general head of conceit and spiritual pride, and to exalt conformity to church and state into the perfection of wisdom and piety. This seems to us "more excellent foolery than the other," and though we would not directly charge it upon Mr. Hudson, there are rash and peevish expressions in his book which might be forced to bear such a construction.

We have thus noticed at some length Mr. Hudson's peculiarities of manner, not because they affect the integrity of his interpretation of objects, or seriously detract from the intrinsic value of his work, but because they are calculated to raise false issues regarding its merits, apart from the shock they sometimes give to good taste. Admitting every thing which can be said against it on these points, it has still solid excellences of thought and style which require a different treatment. We shall, therefore, now attempt to indicate its leading characteristics as a work of philosophical criticism.

Mr. Hudson has thrown the whole strength of his mind into the analysis of the plays, especially the characters. In this respect, Schlegel, Coleridge, and Hazlitt are imperfect and meagre in comparison with him, though for his own success he is considerably indebted to their previous labors. He has practically established one important fact in regard to Shakspeare's characters, that each is not only an individual, but a whole class individualized, and that, as the ideal or common head of a class, it is not only admirable as a character, but indicates the tendencies of a large body of men. So intense is the individuality of each character, that it is only when a powerful analysis has resolved it into its elements that we perceive the vast amount of thought and observation it embodies. This analysis, applied to all his characters, conveys a living idea of the amazing force, clearness, and grasp of Shakspeare's mind, in its relative comprehension of the actual and possible of human nature, and, better than all vague panegyric, demonstrates his unapproachable greatness. For the first time in the history of the intellect, we find in him a mind whose creative vitality is commensurate with its comprehension; reaching down into the heart of things with as much facility as it stretches over and around them; seizing at once the elements of human nature and generalizing the world of men, interpreting the latter by light derived from the former, and by the harmonious action of his powers of conception, combination, and observation, enabled to express mankind in men, and woman-kind in women. When to this we add the capacity of combining the elements of humanity into new and strange forms of being, which are neither natural nor unnatural, but supernatural, we have an object for contemplation which criticism cannot exhaust, and which it has hardly begun to conceive. The wonder is, not that Shakspeare could have created so many characters, but that he could have comprehended a world in so few; that he was so rare a combination of the poet and philosopher as to grasp truth in the concrete, and embody the most gigantic generalizations of the intellect in living forms. Were his characters merely individuals, or merely personified ideas, they would not contain within themselves a fraction of their present applicability to life. As it is, he has occupied almost every department of thought. Goethe has testified that he found it difficult to avoid an imi-

tation or repetition of Shakspeare, when he strove most conscientiously to express himself or his own creations.

In this analytic portion of his labors, Mr. Hudson has opened and worked many rich veins of thought, and indicated practically what is meant by Shakspeare's opulence and breadth of mind. If, however, he had merely analyzed the characters, and exhibited their wealth of suggestiveness, he would have performed but one important portion of a critic's duty. He has not only done this, but has forcibly conceived the characters as individuals, and happily blends their personal traits with their general significance, in reproducing them to the imagination and understanding. Shakspeare's plays constitute a kind of world in themselves, and no person of deep and delicate sympathies can dwell in it long without giving a positive existence to its men and women, and referring to Hamlet and Falstaff and Cordelia as though they were the companions of his eye as well as mind. This is especially true of Mr. Hudson. He appears as the lover or enemy of many characters which Shakspeare is content to represent; and considers what they are and what they do as subjects of approval or condemnation, as much as if they were veritable personages in actual life. This intense realization is, perhaps, the greatest charm of his book, though at the same time it is one of the disturbing forces in his style, and the occasion of many a gust of intellectual wrath. It gives a certain heartiness to his most abstract discussions of principles, and through its influence the peculiar Shakspearian quality of each character rarely escapes his imagination when it eludes his analysis. Indeed, in this interchange of the synthetic and analytic processes of criticism, his various powers appear in all their force and refinement, for he commonly contrives to leave a concrete impression of a character upon the mind after he has subjected its elements to the minutest scrutiny. The result of his examination of each play is a view of its plot and design through the characters, and he thus lifts it into a Shakspearian region of thought, action, and being. The mistake of the German critics, as we have remarked, consists in bringing down the play into a comparatively commonplace region of existence, by overlooking the modification which every thing receives from Shakspeare's own individuality, and from not adequately perceiving that it is the characters which lend greatness to the action and plan of the piece.

In exhibiting the mutual dependence of the characters, and their connection with the drama in which they appear, Mr. Hudson is very successful. He clearly understands that individuals in Shakspeare, as in life, are developed by mutual contact and collision ; and accordingly he views each person in his relations, and interprets his character in the light cast upon it from all parts of the play. For instance, in the masterly analysis of Iago, he sometimes discards the little demon's own self-communings as furnishing evidence of his motives, on the ground of his being a measureless liar ; and indicates, in many instances, the sureness and subtilty of Shakspeare's knowledge of human nature, in making his deceivers thus practise deception upon themselves, and lie even in soliloquies. In this portion of his labors, Mr. Hudson displays a delicacy of thought, a capacity to follow the minutest and most complex operations of the mind, and, occasionally, a microscopic nicety of vision, which would not discredit the most accomplished metaphysician.

It would be difficult to decide whether our critic has been more successful in delineating Shakspeare's men or women. Certainly no reader, who judged of the scope of his powers by their exercise in controversy, or in grappling sturdily with some knotty difficulty which had to be removed by main strength, would give him credit for the delicacy and clearness of his perception of moral beauty and the refinements of the affections. The exquisite felicity with which he touches without profanely handling the most ideal of Shakspeare's heroines, and his constant sense of a certain sacredness attaching to the sex, are in strange contrast, not only to his rough-and-tumble mode of upsetting a critical dunce, but to his close and fierce exposition of an Iago and a Goneril. His delineations of Rosalind, Beatrice, Viola, Perdita, Juliet, Cordelia, Desdemona, Hermione, not to mention others, are conceived with great subtilty of sentiment and imagination, and have an indefinable charm caught from an intense sympathy with their natures. These ideal creations of the great poet, more truly and vitally natural than most of the women of actual life, he has contrived to reproduce whole upon his page, in the clear sweetness and beautiful dignity of their characters, and has been especially successful in setting forth their innate, unconscious purity of

soul, shining through the most equivocal circumstances, and lending a glory to the simplest acts and expressions. It would be vain to look elsewhere for so complete a demonstration of Shakspeare's unrivalled success in exhibiting womankind in women, or a more thorough exposure of the fallacy that Beaumont and Fletcher excelled him in female characters. No extracts would convey a full impression of the felicity with which Mr. Hudson has entered into the spirit of Shakspeare's heroines; but we shall quote a few specimens in part justification of our praise. The following is a portion of his remarks on Perdita:—

“The second part of *Winter's Tale* introduces us to very different scenes and persons from those which make up the first. The lost princess, and heir-apparent of Bohemia, two of the noblest and loveliest beings that ever fancy conceived, occupy the centre of the picture, while around them are clustered rustic shepherds and shepherdesses, amid their pastimes and pursuits, the whole being enlivened by the tricks and humors of a merry peddler and pickpocket. The most romantic beauty and the most comic drollery are here blended together. For simple purity and sweetness, the scene which unfolds the loves and characters of the prince and princess is not surpassed by any thing in Shakspeare, and of course is not approached by any thing out of him. All that is enchanting in romance, lovely in innocence, elevated in feeling, sacred in faith, is here brought together, bathed in the colors of heaven. The poetry is the very innocence of love, embodied in the fragrance of flowers. Clad in immortal freshness, this scene is one of those things which we always welcome as we do the return of spring, and over which our feelings may renew their youth for ever: in brief, so long as nature breathes, and flowers bloom, and hearts love, they will do it in the spirit of what is here expressed.

“Perdita is a fine illustration of native intelligence as distinguished from artificial acquirements, and of inborn dignity bursting through all the disadvantages of the humblest station. Schlegel somewhere says, ‘Shakspeare is particularly fond of showing the superiority of the innate over the acquired’; but he has nowhere done it more beautifully or more powerfully than in this unfledged angel.

‘The prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green-sward, nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself.’

Just as much a queen as if she were brought up at court, and

just as much a shepherdess as if she were born a shepherd's daughter, the graces of the princely and the simplicities of the pastoral character seem striving which shall express her loveliest. She is not a poetical being ; she is poetry itself ; and every thing lends or borrows beauty at her touch. A playmate of the flowers, when we see them together, we can hardly tell whether they take more inspiration from her, or she takes more from them ; and while she becomes the sweetest of poets in making nose-gays, the nose-gays in her hands become the richest of crowns. Courted by the prince in disguise at one of their rustic festivals, herself the mistress of the feast, she transforms the place into a paradise." — Vol. 1. pp. 331, 332.

The following passage from the representation of *Rosalind* is the best description we have seen of the ideal sweetness which characterizes her inimitable merriment : —

" But the crowning feature of the play is *Rosalind*, who, volatile and voluble, talks on for ever, and we wish her to talk on for ever. For wit, this strange, queer, lovely creature is fully equal, perhaps superior, to *Beatrice*, yet no more like her than she is like *Falstaff*. A soft, subtle, nimble essence, consisting in one knows not what, and springing up one can hardly tell how, her wit neither cuts, bites, stings, nor burns ; but plays lightly, briskly, and airily over all things within its reach, enriching, adorning, and enlivening them ; so that one could not desire a greater pleasure than to be the continual theme of it. In its irrepressible and inexhaustible vivacity, it waits not for occasion, but dances forth in a perpetual stream, as if her very breath were manufactured into wit by some intellectual heaven-made perpetual motion ; insomuch that we can scarce conceive but that her dreams are made up of cunning, quirkish, graceful fancies. Her heart is a perennial fountain of affectionate cheerfulness ; even her deepest sighs are breathed forth in a wrappage of innocent mirth ; and an arch smile of playfulness irradiates her saddest tears. No trial can break, no misfortune can damp, no sorrow can chill, her flow of spirits ; in the constant playful gushings of her sweetly-tempered nature, even when she tries to chide, ' faster than her tongue doth make offence, her eye doth heal it up.' " — Vol. 1. pp. 284, 285.

In a different strain is the noble portrait of *Hermione*, — one of those masterpieces of female character which we are glad to see that Mr. Hudson profoundly appreciates. We have not room to quote it, and must also pass over the beautiful delineations of *Imogen* and *Juliet*, to dwell on the

exquisite view of Cordelia. Mr. Hudson has developed the close connection of this character with the drama in which she appears, with much refinement of analysis and originality of remark. We can take only a portion of his remarks on the wholeness and integrity of her character, as seen in its revelation in deeds.

“Hence it is, that Cordelia affects us so deeply and constantly without our being able to perceive how or why. Hence, also, the impression of reserve that runs through her character; for where the whole moves equally and at once, the parts are not distinctly seen, and therefore seem kept in reserve. And she affects those about her in the same unconscious manner as she affects us; that is, she keeps their thoughts and feelings busy, by keeping what she thinks and feels hidden beneath what she does: an influence goes forth from her by stealth, and stealthily creeps into them; an influence which does not appear, and yet is irresistible, and is therefore irresistible, even *because* it does not appear; and which becomes an undercurrent in their minds, circulates in their blood, as it were, and enriches their life with a beauty which seems their own, and yet is not their own: so that she steals upon us through them, and we think of her the more because they, without suspecting it, remind us of her; and her light seems brighter because it triumphs over concealment, and makes its very obstructions luminous; as the moon, when muffling her face in a cloud, often turns the cloud itself into moon, and thus gets the more revealed for the very obscurations in which she seems trying to hide. No one can see Cordelia and be the same that he was before, though utterly unconscious the while of any communication from her. It is as if, without knowing it, or apprising them of it, she wrote her name in the foreheads of whoever approached her, where all may read it but themselves; or deposited about their persons some secret, mysterious aroma, which, when they are remote from her and thoughtless of her, keeps giving out its perfume, and testifying, though they know it not, that they have been with her.

“Accordingly her father loves her most, yet knows not why; has no assignable reasons for his feeling, and therefore cannot reason it down; casts her off from his bounty, but cannot cast her out of his heart; is restless in her absence, as if there were some secret power about her which he cannot spare, yet did not dream of its existence so long as she was with him. And ‘since her going into France, the Fool has much pined away,’ as if the consciousness of her being near, though perhaps not in sight, were necessary to his health; so that he sickens upon the loss

of her, and his life seems travelling away, or travelling home to her; and yet he suspects not wherefore, and knows but that she was by and his spirits were nimble, she is gone and his spirits are drooping." — Vol. II. pp. 260 – 262.

There is too wide a variety of subjects included in Mr. Hudson's volumes to allow us room for a special criticism on his treatment of each. His lectures on *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cymbeline*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, afford perpetual stimulants both to attention and controversy. In these he has given powerful, and for the most part accurate, delineations of Prospero, Shylock, Jaques, Romeo, Mercutio, and Caliban, not to mention Ariel, the Nurse, and Bottom. His sketches of Malvolio as "self-love-sick," — of Jaques as a refined epicure of sentimental emotion, "an utterly useless, yet perfectly harmless man, seeking wisdom by abjuring its first principle," — of Parolles, "that prince of braggarts, that valiant word-gun, that pronoun of a man, a marvellous compound of wit, volubility, impudence, rascality, and poltroonery," as a "bugbear of pretension and shadow in man's clothing," — of Master Slender, as a "most potent piece of imbecility, an indescribable and irresistible nihility, who is obliged to be *sui generis* from a lack of force of character to imitate or resemble any body else," — of Caliban, as "a strange, uncouth, malignant, yet marvellously lifelike confusion of natures, part man, part demon, part brute, whom Prospero by his wonderful art and science has educated into a sort of poet," — are all admirably done and faithful to the subject; but we can only allude to them. In the sharp analysis and genial reproduction of the comic characters, Mr. Hudson shows that he is as capable of understanding the philosophy of the ludicrous as of sympathizing with its mirth.

But the finest portion of his work is that devoted to the four great tragedies, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. These bear evident marks of much elaboration in thought and diction, and rank, in our opinion, with the best specimens of philosophical criticism in English or German literature. The vigor and brilliancy of the style, and the verbal felicities and *Hudsonisms* with which it is variegated, are likely to draw away attention, in some degree, from the real weight and importance of the matter. It would be absurd

to say that they are altogether original, for complete originality on subjects which have engaged the attention of so many powerful intellects would be another name for extravagance and paradox ; but they are original in the sense of containing the deeply meditated opinions of one mind, who, while he has freely sought light from other minds, has evidently adopted no opinions which he has not scrupulously examined. Some views which are prominent in other writers he has included in his own, by altering their relations and limiting their application ; but he has not hesitated to reject many which are well accredited. The wonderful characters of these dramas he appears to have profoundly studied, especially in regard to the practical wisdom which may be evolved from them by close study ; and his elucidation of their moral and mental constitution is always able, even when it leaves room for controversy. No one critic has excelled him in the forcible presentation to the understanding and imagination of such a gallery of characters as Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Hamlet, Polonius, Ophelia, Lear, Cordelia, Othello, Iago, and Desdemona.

Mr. Hudson's general idea of Hamlet, Shakspeare's enigma in character, is that of "conscious plenitude of intellect, united with exceeding fulness and fineness of sensibility, and guided by a predominant sentiment of moral rectitude" ; and he attempts to show, with great force and ingenuity, that Hamlet is withheld from action, not from the lack of will, but by the strife in his mind between incompatible duties ; filial piety prompting him to obey the commands of the ghost, conscience forbidding him to commit regicide and murder ; and the result is, that the greatness of his nature can be expressed only in thought. It might be objected to this, that will is a relative term, and even admitting that Hamlet possessed more will than many who act with decision and rapidity, the fact that his other powers were larger in proportion justifies the common belief, that he was deficient in energy of purpose. Mr. Hudson says that he always acts with decision, where his moral nature is not divided between incompatible duties ; but this might be said with as much truth of the most inefficient person, it being the characteristic of a healthy mind that the will is in such harmony with the conscience and the intellect that there can be no strife between duties, but there must be a resolute choice of one course of action as on the

whole the wisest and best. The truth is, Hamlet is so complex a creation, and includes within the general unity of his character such a variety of elements, that it is almost impossible to start any theory regarding him which shall adequately translate our feeling of his individuality into an intellectual form ; and Mr. Hudson himself is compelled to admit that there is a mystery about him which " baffles the utmost efforts of criticism," and to present his own view with more indecision and less positiveness than is usual with him.

It would be easy to prove that the play of Hamlet, considered as a work of art, is not so great as two or three of the other tragedies ; but the feelings of men will always pronounce in favor of its containing the greatest of Shakspeare's characters. Considered in respect to its universality, Lear, Macbeth, and Othello are but great specialities in comparison ; more distinctly apprehended, it is true, and addressing with more potency the strongest passions and affections, but rather invigorating us with a grand impression of human powers and capacities, than prompting those " thoughts which wander through eternity," or touching that inward sense of our inefficiency as moral beings, which is the mournful fascination of Hamlet. The reading or representation of the other plays produces a rush and glow of the blood, a feeling of power and greatness as connected with the energies of guilt and the struggles of passion, a wonderful sense of what man is able to effect both in obeying and conquering conscience. The impression left by Hamlet is that of profound melancholy.

Many of the various elements in Hamlet's character Mr. Hudson has distinctly exhibited, and acutely reconciled some of its apparent inconsistencies ; and as a whole, we think his essay will bear comparison with the best which have been written on this exhaustless subject. The other characters of the play, especially Ophelia and Polonius, are admirably discriminated. For mingled heartiness and strength, the following passages on Polonius are excellent.

" Polonius is in nearly all respects the antithesis of Hamlet, though Hamlet doubtless includes him as the heavens include the earth. He is a sort of political ossification or petrification, whose soul, if he ever had one, has got wholly absorbed in his understanding. A man of but one method, that of intrigue, and of but one motive, that of interest ; wholly given up to the arts of management ; with his fingers always itching to pull the wires of

some intricate plot; and without any sense or perception of the fitness of times and occasions; he is called to act in a matter where such arts and methods are especially inappropriate and unavailing, and therefore he only succeeds of course in overreaching and circumventing himself. In this fanaticism of intrigue surviving the powers from which it originally sprung lies the explanation, not only of his character, but of a class of characters which is as immortal as human folly. Thus in Polonius we have the type of a politician in his dotage; and all his follies and blunders arise from his undertaking to act the politician where he is especially required to be a man. This, I am aware, is making him out a caricature rather than a character, for a man of but one motive or one feature is a caricature; nevertheless it is such a caricature as we occasionally meet with in actual life. — Vol. II. pp. 114, 115.

“Habits of intrigue have extinguished in Polonius the powers of insight and adaptation to circumstances; he of course discerns not the unfitness of his usual methods to the new exigency, while at the same time his faith in the craft which he has hitherto found so successful betrays him into the most overweening assurance. Hence, also, that singular but most characteristic specimen of unconscious grannyism, namely, his pedantic, unseasonable, and impertinent trifling and dallying with artful forms and turns of thought and speech amidst the most serious business, though conceiving and swearing the while that he is using no art at all; where, mindless of the occasion, and absorbed in his frivolous fancies, he appears not unlike a certain learned dunce who ‘could speak no sense in several languages’; and shows what a tedious old fool he is, the moment he leaves to ‘hunt the train of policy,’ and forsakes the habitual routine of intrigue and management. Superannuated politicians, indeed, like Polonius, seldom appear wise but in proportion as they fall back upon the resources of memory; for out of these resources, the ashes, so to speak, of long extinct faculties, they may seem wise after the fountains of wisdom are dried up within them; as a man who *has lost* his sight may seem to distinguish colors perfectly, so long as he does not undertake to speak of the colors about him. On the whole, Polonius is a fine exemplification of the truth, that while wisdom grows more bright and beautiful as it waxes older, aged cunning relapses into garrulous dotage; and that amid the decays of sense, nothing can retain the soul in its dignity but a faith in the truth, and a child-like simplicity of heart which reposes meekly and gently upon a wisdom above its own.” — pp. 123, 124.

The lecture on *Macbeth* is the ablest in the volume for sustained vigor of thought and style. Its leading excellence consists in that absorption of the writer's mind in his subject, which lends to his essay a portion of the grandeur of the play itself, while it prevents him from indulging in any freaks of digression. The general view taken of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, we think, is as original as it is true, and it is sustained with much power. Imagination, considered both as a faculty of the mind and as an element of character, is most profoundly analyzed ; and in a passage of which we can give but a small part, it is applied to the settlement of various disputes regarding the degree and kind of guilt which should attach respectively to these partners in crime.

“ A strong and excitable imagination, set on fire of conscience, naturally fascinates and spell-binds the other faculties, and thus gives an objective force and effect to its own internal workings. Under this guilt-begotten hallucination, the subject loses present dangers in horrible imaginings, and comes to be tormented with his own involuntary creations. Thus conscience inflicts its retributions, not directly in the form of remorse, but indirectly through imaginary terrors which again react on the conscience, as fire is kept burning by the current of air which itself generates. In such a mind the workings of conscience may be prospective and preventive ; the very conception of crime starting up a swarm of terrific visions to withhold the subject from perpetration. Arrangement is thus made in our nature for a process of compensation, in that the same faculty which invests crime with unreal attractions also calls up unreal terrors to deter from its commission. A predominance of this faculty everywhere marks the character and conduct of *Macbeth*. Hence his apparent freedom from compunctious visitings, even when he is in reality most subject to them. He seems conscienceless from the very form in which his conscience works ; seems flying from outward dangers, while conscious guilt is the very source of his apprehensions. It is probably from oversight of this, that some have pronounced him a mere cautious, timid, remorseless villain, restrained from crime only by a shrinking, selfish apprehensiveness. Undoubtedly there is much in his conduct that appears to sustain this view : he does indeed seem dead to the guilt and morbidly alive to the dangers of his situation ; free from remorse of conscience, and filled with terrors of imagination ; unchecked by moral feelings, and oppressed by selfish fears : but whence his wonderful and uncontrollable irritability of imagination ? How comes his mind so prolific of horrible imaginings, but that his

imagination itself is set on fire of hell? The truth is, he seems remorseless only because in his mind the agonies of remorse project and translate themselves into the spectres of a conscience-stricken imagination.

"In *Lady Macbeth*, on the contrary, the workings of conscience can only be retrospective and retributive : she is too unimaginative either to be allured to crime by imaginary splendors, or withheld from it by imaginary terrors. Without an organ to project and embody its workings in outward visions, her conscience can only prey upon itself in the tortures of remorse. Accordingly, she knows no compunctious visitings before the deed, nor any suspension or alleviation of them after it. Thus, from her want or weakness of imagination, she becomes the victim of a silent but most dreadful retribution. Conscience being left to its own resources, she may indeed possess its workings in secret, but she can never for a moment repress them ; nay, she cannot reveal them if she would, and she dare not if she could ; the fires burn not outwards into spectres to sear her eyeballs and frighten her out of her self-possession, but concentrate themselves into hotter fury within her. This is a form of anguish to which Heaven has apparently denied the relief or the mitigation of utterance. The agonies of an embosomed hell cannot be told, they can only be felt ; or, at most, the awful secret can be but dimly shadowed forth, in the sighings of the furnace when all is asleep but the unquenchable fire, or in the burning asunder of the cords that unite the soul to its earthly dwelling-place. With such amazing depth and power of insight does Shakspeare detect and unfold the secret workings of the human mind!" — Vol. II. pp. 165 – 167.

The *Weird Sisters* Mr. Hudson has painted in all their moral hideousness and grotesque grandeur.

"The *Weird Sisters*, indeed, and all that belongs to them, are but poetical impersonations of evil influences : they are the imaginative, irresponsible agents or instruments of the devil ; capable of inspiring guilt, but not of incurring it ; in and through whom all the powers of their chief seem bent up to the accomplishment of a given purpose. But with all their essential wickedness, there is nothing gross or vulgar or sensual about them. They are the very purity of sin incarnate ; the vestal virgins, so to speak, of hell ; radiant with a sort of inverted holiness ; fearful anomalies in body and soul, in whom every thing seems reversed ; whose elevation is downwards ; whose duty is sin ; whose religion is wickedness ; and the law of whose being is violation of law !

Unlike the Furies of Æschylus, they are petrific, not to the senses, but to the thoughts. At first, indeed, on merely looking at them, we can hardly keep from laughing, so uncouth and grotesque is their appearance : but afterwards, on looking *into* them, we find them terrible beyond description ; and the more we look into them, the more terrible do they become ; the blood almost curdling in our veins, as, dancing and singing their infernal glees over embryo murders, they unfold to our thoughts the cold, passionless, inexhaustible malignity and deformity of their nature." — Vol. II. p. 148.

The essay on Lear is full of admirable matter, showing, however, a struggle with the difficulties of the subject. In some respects it is the most powerful and the most characteristic of Mr. Hudson's Lectures. Lear himself is analyzed at considerable length, and the amazing grandeur of the character, as it develops itself under the pressure of unnatural wrong, and the might and variety of passions which are let loose throughout the drama, are set forth with great distinctness and a firm clutch of the subject in all its parts. Edmund is finely examined, and well discriminated from Iago and Richard. Kent and Edgar are clearly portrayed in their connection with the general design of the play. The description of Cordelia we have referred to before ; but her heavenly beauty is not more fully shown than the selfishness and "hell-born tact" of her sisters. "There is a smooth, glib rhetoric," says Mr. Hudson, "in their professions, unsweetened with the least infusion of feeling, and a dry, hard, icy alertness of thought and speech in what afterwards comes from them, which is almost terrific, and which burns an impression into our minds from its very coldness" ; and further on he does full justice to the "wantonness and intrepidity of their malice." The Fool has ever been a stumbling-block to critics of the play, but Mr. Hudson, instead of denying his right to be in it at all, has wisely attempted to show Shakespeare's object in placing him there. We extract the concluding paragraph of his view of the character.

"I know not, therefore, how I can better describe the Fool, than as the soul of pathos in a sort of comic masquerade ; one in whom fun and frolic are sublimed and idealized into tragic beauty ; with the garments of mourning showing through and softened by the lawn of playfulness. In his 'laboring to outjest Lear's heart-struck injuries,' we see that his wits are set a-dancing by

grief ; that his jests are secreted from the depths of a heart struggling with pity and sorrow, as foam enwreathes the face of deeply troubled waters. So have I seen the lip quiver and the cheek dimple into a smile, to relieve the eye of a burden it was reeling under, yet ashamed to let fall. There is all along a shrinking, velvet-footed delicacy of step in the Fool's antics, as if, awed by the holiness of the ground, they had put the shoes from off their feet ; and he seems bringing diversion to our thoughts, that he may the better steal a sense of woe into our hearts ; as grief sometimes puts on a face of mirth, and then gets betrayed by its very disguise. It is truly hard to tell whether the inspired antics which glitter and sparkle from the surface of his mind be in more impressive contrast with the dark, tragic scenes into which they are thrown, like rockets into a midnight tempest, or with the undercurrent of deep, tragic thoughtfulness out of which they flatteringly issue and play." — Vol. II. pp. 273, 274.

We have little space left to remark on Mr. Hudson's criticism of the tragedy of Othello. Iago, Othello, and Desdemona, characters well fitted to test the strength and delicacy of his powers of analysis and interpretation, he has treated very differently from most of Shakspeare's critics. Iago he considers as acting, not from revenge, but from a certain intellectual pride and "lust of the brain" ; in regard to his own assignment of the motives for his deeds, our critic agrees with Coleridge in calling it "the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity." This character is Mr. Hudson's masterpiece of intellectual anatomy. Iago is the perfection of demoniacal cleverness, and it is almost pleasant to see the wonderful inward mechanism of his unmatched malignity of nature, thus exhibited in all its subtilty and complexity of arrangement and movement. Othello is represented as the exact opposite of Iago, even in respect to jealousy, which, being a mean and despicable passion, is more appropriate to our honest Ancient than to the noble Moor. Mr. Hudson thinks that Othello acted neither from jealousy nor revenge, but from a sense of justice, in destroying Desdemona ; that he killed her, not from suspicion, but from evidence of her guilt ; and the fact that this evidence was the manufacture of Iago's diabolical ingenuity does not alter the motives of his conduct. There can be little doubt that this view is substantially the true one. Othello gives evidence, not only in his character taken by itself, but in various portions of the play, that jealousy and re-

venge can have no place in his open and ingenuous mind ; and in the last scene he particularly discriminates between murdering Desdemona and sacrificing her. But we think that the critic does not sufficiently consider, in his eloquent admiration of Othello's character, that though the intention of the latter is to punish crime, he has a wild way of doing it, and that the frightful tempests of passion which sweep over his mind, and hurry him into the commission of the deed, are characteristic not so much of a just man as of a noble barbarian, who mistakes the object of justice from the very fact that justice with him is a passion rather than a principle. We do not believe, as Mr. Hudson seems to do, that Shakspeare intended Othello as a model of manhood, but as an instance of the weakness of a noble nature, in being the victim of hot and treacherous impulses, when those impulses pointed in the direction of honor. The fact that he does not act from jealousy, revenge, or any mean motive, but from passions noble and generous when properly restrained, does not vindicate his manhood from the reproach of folly in giving himself up to the excesses of his sensibility. Mr. Hudson praises the objectiveness of Othello's mind, and if we consider the Moor only in his calm moments, the praise is deserved ; but no person, who has ever felt the stir of a fierce impulse when he has thought himself wronged or insulted, need be told that passion not only blinds the best intellect, but draws the conscience itself into its boiling depths ; not only impels to act without a clear view of the case, but for the time sanctifies the impulse as right and just. Every true and great man, therefore, distrusts what his passions teach, and no person can be a model of manhood whose nature is their victim.

The most beautiful portion of the lecture is that devoted to the representation of Othello and Desdemona, in respect to their fitness for each other ; and a triumphant answer is given to the many objections to the match on the score of color and character. Mr. Hudson calls it " the chaste union of magnanimity and meekness." In his delineation of Desdemona, he develops the exceeding beauty of this most delicate and exquisite of Shakspeare's women, with uncommon refinement of sentiment and certainty of minute analysis, — at the same time a little injuring the effect by snapping his epigrammatic torpedos in the faces of the champions of woman's rights. We cannot refrain from extracting a portion

of this part of the lecture, in illustration of the flexibility with which the writer adapts his style to the tone and character of his subject, and of his singular felicity in exhibiting the pathos of gentleness and the beauty of deep, strong, and quiet affection.

“Desdemona’s character may be almost said to consist in the union of purity and impressibility. All spirit, she yet appears all sense ; with her whole form perfectly ensouled, instinct with life in every part,

‘The eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheek, and so distinctly wrought,
That we might almost say her body thought.’

Thus every organ of her life, her entire frame, seems receptive of influences and impressions from without : drinking in at every pore the inspiration of external objects, she lives so absorbed in those objects as scarcely to admit a sense of her own existence. We have a hint of this in her father’s account of her ; —

‘A maiden never bold,
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blushed at itself’ ; —

as of a being with so many influences and impressions flowing in upon her, living so entranced amid a world of beauty and delight, that betwixt awe and joy her whole soul kept evermore looking and listening ; and if at any time she chanced upon a stray thought or vision of herself, she shrunk back surprised and abashed, as if she had caught herself in the presence of a stranger whom modesty kept her from looking in the face. It is through this most delicate impressibility that she sometimes gets frightened out of her real character, as in her equivocation about the handkerchief, and her childlike pleading for life in the last scene, where her perfect candor and resignation are overmastered by impressions of immediate terror.

“But with this exquisite susceptibility of external impressions, she is nevertheless susceptible only of the good. No element of impurity can insinuate itself ; her mind is closed not only against its entrance, but against the knowledge, and even the suspicion, of its existence. Her whole nature seems wrought about with some subtle, mysterious texture of moral sympathies and antipathies, which always selects and appropriates whatever is pure, without taking any thought or touch of the evil mixed with it ; so that

‘Her life flows on a sacred stream,
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirrored ; which, though shapes of ill
Do hover round its surface, glides in light,
And takes no shadow from them.’

Even Iago's moral oil-of-vitriol cannot eat a passage into her mind : from his envenomed wit she extracts the element of harmless mirth, without receiving or even suspecting the venom with which it is charged." — Vol. II. pp. 342 – 344.

Mr. Hudson, in these Lectures on Shakspeare, has made the analysis of every character the occasion of observations on a wide variety of subjects which its nature suggests. He has thus given his philosophy of life, in relation to the practical operation of the passions and beliefs of men ; and we think he has been especially successful in treating that important branch of ethics which refers to the passage of virtues into vices, through their connection with pride, vanity, or extravagant enthusiasm. As a large portion of the world's goodness is, like King Richard's frame, but half made up, and offends from its inharmonious and partial character where it is most impressive by its separate qualities, the field open to the ethical analyst is unbounded ; and as we have rather ungently touched on some of Mr. Hudson's digressions, it is but just to observe that he has evinced throughout a disposition to disconnect virtue from cant, fanaticism, and conceit ; that he has detected with a sure eye, and whipped with an honest ardor, the excellence which is self-conscious, and the purity which is proudly malignant ; and that he has exhibited with a fine union of sagacity and eloquence the beauty of that humble goodness which seeks to elude the eye, which "vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up." In a period like the present, when conscience rushes to the rostrum and explodes in fifth-rate heroics, and every "puny whipster" of morality mistakes his appetite for notoriety for a call from the seventh heaven to rail at every person wiser and better than himself, such lessons in ethics may not be without their effect, recommended as they are by a vigor and wit as inexhaustible as the folly and fanaticism on which they are exercised. We trust that the present volumes will not be the last in which the author's keen intellect and sturdy character will find adequate expression. He has not, as yet, touched the historical plays of Shakspeare, a sphere of investigation and interpretation where he may win additional honors. In choosing the world's great poet as the text for his inquiries into human nature, he has a subject which, however it may exhaust the resources of criticism, is in itself exhaustless. The present work we consider an evidence rather than the measure of his capacity ;

and when we next meet him on the open field of literature, we trust to find some extravagances retrenched and some peculiarities suppressed, which now to some extent injure his style, and encumber the movement of his mind.

- ART. IV. — 1. *A Plea for Peasant Proprietors, with the Outlines of a Plan for their Establishment in Ireland.* By WILLIAM THOMAS THORNTON, Author of "Over Population and its Remedy." London : John Murray. 1848. 12mo. pp. 256.
2. *Letters on the Condition of the People of Ireland.* By THOMAS CAMPBELL FOSTER, Esq., of the Middle Temple, "The Times" Commissioner. Second Edition. London : Chapman & Hall. 1847. 8vo. pp. 771.
3. *Past and Present. Chartism.* By THOMAS CARLYLE. New York : George P. Putnam. 1848. 12mo. pp. 386.

THE question respecting the distribution of property, which has hitherto been discussed only in the abstract by the political economists, has now become one of practical interest and of the gravest importance. The sacredness of the institution has hitherto been universally recognized. That the accumulation of wealth in the hands of individuals was necessary, was absolutely indispensable, in order that the aggregate property of the nation might increase, and for the maintenance of order, the prevention of endless disputes, the encouragement of industry and enterprise, and the promotion of all the higher interests of society, was a fact that no one thought of denying. The inheritor of an estate usually claims it even as a natural right ; he seldom thinks of defending his possession of it merely on the ground of general expediency. He holds that he is indebted for it, not to government, or legislation, or the general consent of the community, but to those general principles of morality and natural law which protect his person and insure him the free use of his faculties and his time. Consequently, he invokes the aid of the law,